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FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1612
INFO RUEHB/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 4405
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 0353
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 4660
RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN PRIORITY 0320
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 9764
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 2644
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 4058
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 9793
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 0183
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE PRIORITY 0295
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 0914
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1804
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 1147
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 001346

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DEPT FOR SCA/INS, PRM

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/26/2016

TAGS: PREF PGOV NP

SUBJECT: UNHCR ON REFUGEE ISSUES

REF: KATHMANDU 1328

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

UNHCR Urges Government to Allow Camp Census

¶11. (C) Abraham Abraham, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Country Representative, told the Ambassador on May 26 that he had met with K.P. Oli, Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, on May 25 and was pressing the new government to focus on refugee issues. Abraham said he had urged Oli to allow UNHCR to conduct a census of people in the Bhutanese refugee camps and immediately issue travel documents for vulnerable Bhutanese refugee cases. Abraham noted that he was encouraged by Oli's knowledge on the issue.

Abraham said Oli agreed to look into the census and document issues, but first wanted to meet his Bhutanese counterpart at the Non-Aligned Movement Ministerial in Kuala Lumpur on May ¶30.

Internationalization of Issue Still Option

¶12. (C) Abraham said Oli had acknowledged that not all Bhutanese refugees would return to Bhutan. Oli had told him that the number of returnees might be as low as 5,000. Abraham worried to the Ambassador about how long the international community would be willing to sustain the camps, and suggested raising the profile of the issue. The Ambassador noted that Oli had said he would be open to other options. Thus, if the Government of Nepal were to agree to UNHCR's camp census, then it would be easier for the international community to say that the problem was not on both sides. Rather, this was a problem that Bhutan had caused and had failed to address. The Ambassador stressed the important role that India could play in getting Bhutan to accept back some refugees, thus opening the door for other solutions.

Bhutanese Refugee Leader Planning Rally

¶13. (C) Abraham told the Ambassador that Bhutanese refugee leader Tek Nath Rizal was mobilizing refugees to stage a protest in front of the UN building the week of May 29. Abraham worried that political leaders like Rizal were indoctrinating the refugees to accept only return to Bhutan. However, if given other alternatives and educated about the choices, Abraham believed that many of the refugees would choose third-country resettlement.

Tibetan Issues

¶14. (C) Abraham said he had also urged Oli to issue birth certificates to both Bhutanese and Tibetan children born in Nepal. Abraham explained that Nepal was a signatory to the 1990 UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. Providing children with birth certificates was a minimum right that Nepal should guarantee under the Convention. Abraham also pressed Oli to issue exit permits for Tibetan refugees transiting to India. Abraham had acknowledged that Nepal found the issue sensitive, but stressed to Oli that not issuing exit permits raised, rather than limited, the profile of the transiting Tibetans. Oli commented that the Home and Foreign Ministries needed to consult on these issues.

Comment

¶15. (C) We are unlikely to have a read-out of the meeting between Oli and his Bhutanese counterpart on the margins of NAM Ministerial before the June 1 Core Group Meeting in The Hague.

MORIARTY